

Message Text

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12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L FREETOWN 0314

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, EAID, SL

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT STEVENS' RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES

1. IN UNUSUALLY LONG PRIVATE CONVERSATION IN THE PRESENCE OF AN UNUSUALLY LARGE NUMBER OF CABINET MINISTERS AFTER OFFICIAL CREDENTIALS PRESENTATION, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 14, PRESIDENT STEVENS SAID SIERRA LEONE DESIRED BEST OF RELATIONS WITH UNITED STATES AND DESCRIBED CURRENT RELATIONS AS GOOD. HE URGED THE US NOT TO BELIEVE THAT GOSL HAD TENDENCIES TOWARD COMMUNISM. GOSL WAS UNIQUE, INTERESTED IN ITS OWN NATION AND PEOPLE.

2. TURNING TO SPECIFIC ISSUE, STEVENS SHOWED KEEN INTEREST IN PROPOSED BETHLEHEM STEEL INVOLVEMENT IN SL. HE AWARE OF CURRENT DELAY IN GOSL DECISION CONCERNING TERMS OF RUTILE OPERATION BUT EXPRESSED SPECIAL INTEREST OVER POSSIBLE FAILURE DELCO MARAMPA OPERATION AND NEED FOR OUTSIDE INTERVENTION TO KEEP MARAMPA OPEN AND SAVE 3,000 JOBS. HE INDICATED SOME OF HIS COLLEAGUES IN THE CABINET FAVORED AVOIDING QUICK MOVEMENT IN DIRECTION OF BETHLEHEM AND HOPED SOME OTHER COUNTRY WOULD BECOME INVOLVED. HE PARTICULARLY MENTIONED ROMANIA. HE ALSO MENTIONED PEER PRESSURE BY

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WHICH HE CLEARLY MEANT OTHER DEVELOPING, RAW-MATERIAL

PRODUCING COUNTRIES. BUT STEVENS FELT "A BIRD IN THE HAND WAS WORTH TWO IN THE BUSH" AND DIDN'T FEEL THAT DELCO WOULD CONTINUE UNAIDED MUCH LONGER. HE IMPLIED HE PUTTING PRESSURE ON CABINET TO MOVE SATISFACTORILY IN DIRECTION BETHLEHEM. IN REGARDS MARAMPA, HE INDICATED POSSIBILITY SPLITTING TONKOLILI CONCESSION FROM THAT CURRENTLY IN HANDS OF DELCO. STEVENS SAID THAT HE HAD DISCUSSED BETHLEHEM WITH HIS COLLEAGUE, LIBERIAN PRESIDENT TOLBERT, WHO HAD SPOKEN IN GLOWING TERMS OF BETHLEHEM'S OPERATION THERE. THIS SEEMED IMPORTANT FACTOR TO STEVENS.

3. I THANKED THE PRESIDENT FOR HIS KIND WORDS ABOUT US/SL RELATIONS AND ALSO FOR SPEEDY ACTION ON PART OF GOSL IN ALLOWING PRESENTATION OF CREDENTIALS WITHIN FEW DAYS OF ARRIVAL. I SHOWED AWARENESS OF BETHLEHEM INTEREST IN SL AND MENTIONED MY OWN VISIT TO BETHLEHEM LAST MONTH. ISAIID BETHLEHEM INDEED HAD STRONG INTEREST IN SL BUT WERE FRUSTRATED AT SLOW PACE OF SL DECISION-MAKING ON RUTILE. THEY WERE PREPARED TO BEGIN ACTIVITIES IMMEDIATELY AND HAD BEEN SO FOR SOME TIME BUT SL DID NOT SEEM TO BE ABLE TO MAKE UP ITS MIND OVER IMPORTANT DETAILS. THE RUTILE OPERATION WAS KEYSTONE FOR BETHLEHEM. IF RUTIL PROJECT PROCEEDED SATISFACTORILY BETHLEHEM WOULD OBVIOUSLY HAVE INCREASED INTEREST IN HELPING BAIL OUT DELCO. THEIR INTEREST PROBABLY WOULD INCLUDE MAINTAINING TONKOLILI OPERATION. BETHLEHEM ALSO INTERESTED IN POSSIBLE DEPOSITS NEARER LIBERIAN BORDER. FOR MY PART I WAS SURPRISED THAT COMPANY AND GOVERNMENT NOT ABLE TO REACH MUTUALLY AMICABLE SOLUTION QUICKLY. CLEARLY FUTURE US PRIVATE INVESTMENT WOULD BE AFFECTED BY DEGREE OF SUCCESS BETHLEHEM HAD IN ARRANGEMENTS WITH GOSL.

4. STEVENS STRESSED GOSL'S SINCERE INTEREST IN DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND EXPRESSED HOPE THAT US ASSISTANCE MIGHT BE MORE FORTHCOMING THAN IN THE PAST FEW YEARS.

5. HE MENTIONED THAT HIS HEALTH WAS GOOD BUT THAT HE WAS GOING TO SWITZERLAND FOR TEN TO TWELVE DAYS

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FOR AN EXAMINATION. THE DOCTORS THERE KNEW HIM AND HIS HISTORY AND COULD TREAT HIM BEST. FINALLY HE INDICATED A DESIRE TO MAINTAIN CLOSE, PERSONAL CONTACT WITH ME WHENEVER EVENTS WARRANTED.

SAMUELS

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NNN

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